

STATEMENT OF DANIEL N. WENK, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING S. 126, TO MODIFY THE BOUNDARY OF MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

MARCH 20, 2007

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 126, a bill to modify the boundary of Mesa Verde National Park.

The Department supports S. 126. This bill would adjust the boundary of Mesa Verde National Park (park) by adding to the park a total of approximately 360 acres, located near the park entrance. This land includes 324 acres currently owned by the Henneman family and 38 acres owned by the Mesa Verde Foundation. The Secretary is authorized to acquire the land by donation, purchase from a willing seller with donated or appropriated funds, or by exchange.

We estimate that \$45,000 would be required for closing and survey costs for the Henneman property. Acquisition is estimated to cost approximately \$1.5 million. At this time, operational costs are estimated to be minimal and are not expected to exceed approximately \$20,000 per year. This acquisition would have to compete with other Park Service priorities for funds.

Mesa Verde was authorized as our nation's tenth national park in 1906 and currently includes 52,122 acres. The resources preserved at Mesa Verde include more than 4,000 known archeological sites, three million objects in the park's collections, and natural resources that

provided a rich environment and supported the lives of the Ancestral Puebloans who lived there for more than 700 years.

The Henneman and Mesa Verde Foundation properties are adjacent to the current park boundary and in full view from the entrance road into the park. The property forms the foreground of the view of Point Lookout, the promontory which Congress added to the park in 1931. In addition to its strategic position at the park's entrance, the Henneman property possesses Ancestral Puebloan sites, a several-hundred-year-old pinyon-juniper forest, a major wildlife corridor and important winter habitat, and the largest recorded population of the globally imperiled Gray's Townsend daisy, a few of which are found within the current park boundary.

The Hennemans approached Mesa Verde National Park in 2002 with their desire to protect their property through its inclusion in the park. Currently, the Henneman property could be developed and is zoned for subdivision into 10-acre lots and the Hennemans have received written offers from a developer interested in constructing a high-end RV park and convention center on the property. Rather than selling for development, the Hennemans have entered into a contract to sell their property to The Conservation Fund by November 15, 2007, contingent upon passage of this boundary legislation and the availability of funds to acquire the property.

The Mesa Verde Foundation has been working with the park to provide a visitor information center adjacent to the collections facility being designed by the National Park Service for construction. The facility will be located in part on the Foundation property. The Foundation

intends to donate their 38-acre parcel to the park, but cannot do so until the land has been included within the park boundary.

We understand that the Hennemans have discussed their desire to include their property in the park with the Montezuma County Commissioners. The commissioners' position was neutral, stating that this is a landowner-initiated project, and it is the right of the landowner to exercise their property rights as they desire. They have also talked with their neighbors about the proposal and no opposition has been voiced.

We recommend one amendment to correct the map reference in the bill. In section 3, paragraph 1 strike "entitled '2006 Proposed Mesa Verde National Park Boundary Adjustment'." and insert "entitled 'Mesa Verde National Park Proposed Boundary Adjustment' numbered 307/80,180, and dated March 1, 2007."

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee might have.